A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE "NEW CONSERVATISM" IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE "NEW CONSERVATISM" IN AMERICA

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Purpose -- The fundamental purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the basic tenets of the New Conservatism in America. During the past seventeen years America has found herself perplexed by the onslaught of tremendous intellectual energies being expounded in a relatively new field of endeavor -- New Conservatism. During its short life span it has acquired two intellectually inspired journals (Modern Age and National Review). Our libraries are witnessing an ever-increasing bibliography on the subject. Our college campuses are also bearing witness to an ever-increasing number of students, as well as professors, who are openly proclaiming themselves, or being proclaimed, conservatives. This "sudden burst of energy" on the intellectual level makes doubly important a serious inquiry into its substance.

Results. -- New Conservatism, during its very short life span, has played a significant role in the reincarnation and rejuvenation of the conservative spirit which has been an integral, though subsidiary, part of our country's development. In the absence of a crown and nobility, as witnessed by Europe, the New Conservative has placed renown interest in the institution of private property and the welfare of the individual.

In this, as other developing schools of thought, dissension has developed among its ranks. Out of this dissension has evolved several opposing factions with differing and varying guiding principles. These principles, as well as the concurring ones, will serve as the focal point of this study.

The growth of New Conservatism in America has necessitated a bit of "soul searching" on the part of its proponents as a means of finding some sustaining force within which it might imbue itself with a sense of morality and a sense of history. This search has wandered back into the annals of United States history and across the sea and into the realms of European history. Several champions of the New Conservative doctrine have emerged. Foremost among these stands Edmund Burke. Is this a justifiable choice? If not, where can the New Conservative turn for a philosophy of American conservatism, a philosophy of tradition, order, and preservation that is relevant to the problems - personal as well as social - of an industrial, democratic, progressive society? Does such a philosophy exist? Is such a philosophy possible? These, among other questions, will be thoroughly considered in this study.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study. -- The fundamental purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the basic tenets of the New Conservatism in America. During the past seventeen years America has found herself perplexed by the onslaught of tremendous intellectual energies being expounded in a relatively new field of endeavor -- New Conservatism. During its short life span it has acquired two intellectually inspired journals (Modern Age and National Review). Our libraries are witnessing an ever-increasing bibliography on the subject. Our college campuses are also bearing witness to an ever- increasing number of students, as well as professors, who are openly proclaiming themselves, or being proclaimed, New Conservatives. This "sudden burst of energy" on the intellectual level makes doubly important a serious inquiry into its substance.

Scope and Limitation. -- Because of the prolific number of writings which have emanated from the pens of many self-proclaimed "New Conservatives" during the past seventeen years, and the vast interests considered in these writings, the author of this study has sensed the necessity of limiting it predominantly to three writers. While the selection of

these "three writers" necessarily involves some arbitrary judgment, the literature on New Conservatism seems rather clearly to indicate that these men are the leading spokesmen, among many others of lesser magnitude: Russell Kirk, Peter Viereck and Willmoore Kendall. Primary justification for the selection of these writers rest in the extent to which each of them has seriously, systematically, and candidly presented the case for a revival of conservative thought. A great deal of what has been written on New Conservatism has been written by these men or has been written by others who widely acknowledge the intellectual leadership of Kirk, Viereck, and/or Kendall in the New Conservative "movement".

The present study is not concerned with conservatism as a series of political party principles. It is not an epithet, nor a tool for the eulogist or for the polemist. Realizing the versatility of the term, the writer is inclined to insist, rather arbitrarily, that "conservatism" be considered here as a rather unique type of "ideology". Perhaps it may be considered an ideology because it represents a system of ideas concerned with the distribution of political and social values. It is unique because it cannot stand alone as a self-contained system of normative or substantive goals and preferences, but always stands in "symbiotic" relationship to the national system of substan-

tive ideals which it seeks to fulfill and conserve.

Methods of Research. -- This study is a fusion of three methodologies of research: historical, descriptive, and analytical.

Procedure of Inquiry. -- In launching an analysis of New Conservatism one of the most important initial observations one could make is that the phrase implies a degree of unanimity or cohesiveness among its proponents which simply does not exist. Therefore, the author faces the triple task, in chapter two, of describing what New Conservatism is, what New Conservatives think New Conservatism is, and what critics of New Conservatism think it is.

Chapter three exposes the foundations upon which the basic philosophy of New Conservatism has been built. The three basic pillars of this philosophy, which will be shown in vivid detail, are the political, if it might be referred to as such, social, and economic doctrines of the Honorable Edmund Burke.

Chapter four is an analysis of the conservative philosophies of Russell Kirk, Peter Viereck, and Willmoore Kendall. An earnest and sympathetic attempt is made on the part of the author, to present the philosophies of these writers. A critical analysis which shows considerable deviations from the foundations exposed by Edmund Burke

will be presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter five presents the various dissenting elements which are seen in the writings of the New Conservatives. Among the categories considered will be the New Conservatives' thoughts on tradition and order, religion, civil liberties, and the state. This chapter will perhaps pave the way towards a fuller and more direct appraisal of New Conservatism in terms of analytical structure.

Chapter six presents a general summary and conclusion of the findings of this study.

Sources of Materials and Tools of Research. -- Materials used in this study were obtained from the following sources: Trevor Arnett Library (Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia), Atlanta Public Library (Atlanta, Georgia), Library of Congress (Washington, D. C.), Library of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (Washington, D. C.), and the National War College Library (Washington, D. C.). The various tools utilized in the above sources were microfilms, books, periodicals, newspapers, and pamphlets.

Significance of Study. -- This study would be of minor significance to the reader desiring a thorough knowledge of the subject. But, it should be of major significance to one seeking an analytical compendium of the New Conservatism in America.

Chapter II

New Conservatism: The Problem of Definitions

The last seventeen years witnessed the development of the New Conservatism in America. It is now experiencing wide currency. Almost everywhere that one might cast an eye -- in the daily papers, the journals of opinion, the bookman's window, or the school libraries -- men are seen writing of New Conservatism. The student of the American political mind finds a particular appeal in the New Conservatism, since the swelling bibliography clearly indicates a renewed activity in American political thought. Writers of many species and persuasions refer to the "revival," the "recrudescence," the "return to respectability," of conservatism in America. Having discerned life, perchance even strife, in an area singularly deficient in doctrinaire cleavages, the student whets his scalpel and proceeds to the task of revealing the sources, the nature, the purposes, and the meaning of the New Conservatism in America.

Few words in our political vocabulary have been subjected to more confused and contradictory use than conservatism. Before delving into the actual content of this contradictory term let us first accede to the fact that it does not possess an universally acceptable definition. Therefore, we must not delude ourselves by pre-

tending that it can be defined easily or along conventional lines. As long ago as 500 B.C., the philosopher Confucius pointed out the importance of precise language in a nation's life by stating:

> If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not meant, then what ought to be done remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if morals and art deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion.[1]

The full extent of the confusion or disagreement that persists in the meaning of the term will be later illustrated through citing some of the varying definitions that have been attempted by various political commentators.

The first obstacle that must be noticed by anyone who attempts to arrive at a definition of the word conservatism is that it has two separate and independent tendencies of meaning associated with it.[2] The "fact" that they are only accidentally associated with each other -- that one cannot be deduced from the other, and that they can conflict -- is at the heart of the confusion in its use. The first tendency of meaning is presented in Webster's Dictionary: "con-

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[1]Stated in "What Is An Extremist?" Look, October 28, 1964, p. 34.

[2]Philip C. Chapman, "The New Conservatism," Political Science Quarterly, LXXV (March, 1960), p. 27

servative" is defined as "conserving; preservation," and "conservatism" as "the disposition and tendency to preserve what is established; opposition to change."[3] Derived from the verb "to conserve," this meaning forms the basis or is recognized in some degree by almost everyone who uses the word in everyday speech.

The second tendency associates the word conservatism with a number of specific commitments about the best forms of society and government. These commitments presuppose the ideological elements involved in the concept; therefore, they cannot be defined properly. Very often, commentators have picked out one or the other of these tendencies and identified it as "true conservatism," or the "essential" part of conservatism, and have expelled the other uses of the word from the pale of their approval. This has been of little help, however, because no consensus has developed as to which of the tendencies should be excluded -- as to whether conservatism should mean the desire to conserve the established as such, or a commitment to a particular set of social values.[4] Later in the paper we will discover that it means both.

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[3]Webster's New World Dictionary (Cleveland and New York, 1964), p. 312.

[4]Chapman, op. cit., p. 28.

Perhaps, in order to better comprehend what should or should not be referred to as conservatism, it is necessary to understand how these different connotations of the word came into being. We will take a brief look, therefore, at the historical setting in which the word was born.

According to Mannheim, "It was Chateaubriand who first lent the word its peculiar meaning when he called the periodical he issued to propagate the ideas of the clerical and political restoration, The Conservative."[5] Whatever Chateaubriand intended the word to mean, it was rapidly taken over by every group which had opposed the progress of the French Revolution.

As a distinct political term conservatism is said to be 133 years old, coming into general usuage after the Great Reform Act of 1832 in Great Britain. At that time the word meant "opposition to reform."[6] In Europe, conservative parties generally stood for loyalty to the monarchy, for king and country, and the traditional, natural way of doing things. In America, the colonial conservatives were likely to be loyalists, followers of the Crown, Tories,

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[5]Cited in Karl Mannheim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology (London, 1953), p. 216.

[6]Jasper B. Shannon, "Conservatism," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, CCCXLIV (November, 1962), p. 214.

in the language of their day. Members of the governor's council were generally large landowners, frequently seeking larger grants. They were likely to be officials in the accepted clerical hierachy in the established church of the dominant denomination, and, not infrequently, they were officers in the colonial militia. The American National Republicans, Whigs, were calling themselves "conservatives" by 1830, and the term was adopted as the name of the British Tory Party of 1832.[7]

There were vast differences between the theories of British Tories and Continental Conservatives. And, of course, there were communications and many similarities between them.[8] This is seen quite vividly in the writings of the New American Conservatives. With the major exception of Peter Viereck, they draw much of their inspiration from British conservatism. Yet, they are unable to counsel us as to how the unique historical experience of Britain fits the American scene, and how it can be copied here. This is particularly true of that curious compound of religious as well as economic and social interests and background of the conservative party which is so peculiarly British, and at the same time, is so virulently

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[7] Ibid., p. 15.

[8] Ibid., p. 16.

unappreciated by many of the American interpreters of British politics, as is pointed out by Leslie Lipson:

> Since the country squires were mostly Anglican, while the leaders of commerce were largely nonconformist, the religious split complimented the economic - a fact that contributed materially to a two-party system. Thus founded and fortified, the system had more than a century in which to settle down before encountering its severest test - the impact of rapid technological changes on the economic and social order.[9]

The contest between manufacturers and farmers "amounted to a vertical division in the British economy," whereby industrial wealth and liberal forces became arrayed against landed wealth and conservative power.[10] As the liberal party weakened and as tariff-conscious manufacturers drifted into the conservative camp, labor, at first divided between conservatives and liberals, gave birth to a separate party.[11]

Writing along similar lines, McKitrick has this to say concerning the development and relationship of American and European conservative thought:

> Conservatism as a mode of thought respectable enough to justify formal philosophical expression has never in the past had very organic connections with the problems of this country and this culture. With Europe it has been different: the thoughts of Burke, Maistre, Metternich, Newmann and the rest were real enough responses to stresses that arose 'there,' and as such they remain instructive enough for us or for anyone

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[9]Leslie Lipson, "The Two-Party System in British Politics," American Political Science Review, XLVII (June, 1953), p. 355.

[10]Ibid., p. 357.

[11]Ibid.

> interested in the rich European past. But then to try making parallels with American experience is really straining the connection much too far, especially when it comes to placing men like John Calhoun, John Randolph, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams in the same tradition, one in which they have very little business. For the parallels between American political and cultural development and those of Europe...are infinitely less instructive than are the profound and dramatic contrasts.[12]

Perhaps no proof needs to be presented that "the rich European past" has no parallel in American religious or party history. Consequently, the close integration of British conservative thought with the ideas of some of our New American Conservative writers, the latter of which quote generously from Edmund Burke, hardly has any analogy in American politics. According to Ludwig Freund, "the theorizing 'new conservatives' are virtually 'air-borne' in this country."[13]

In view of these observations, one is led to query: "What, then, is New Conservatism?" In order to try and arrive at an answer to this question the writer will begin by noting briefly four or even five distinct senses in which the words conservatism and conservative are used in current discussion. When an individual describes himself as a conservative, he probably means to express one of these thoughts:

(1) That his temper is conservative, that he has a basic aversion to changes in his mode of living. The overriding traits in this con-

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[12]Quoted in Eric L. McKitrick, "Conservatism Today," American Scholar, XXVII (Winter, 1957-58), pp. 51-52.

[13]Ludwig Freund, "The New American Conservatism and European Conservatism," Ethics, LXVI (October, 1955), p. 12.

servative temperament would probably be habit, inertia, fear, and emulation, all of which move men to seek security and peace with every irrational fiber in their beings. These traits, being of a relative nature, may appear as dominant or recessive features of ones character.[14]

(2) That his tastes are conservative, that his judgments and decisions in the areas of work, play, culture, religions, and social relations are cautious, moderate, and sometimes predictable. Such an individual has something substantial to defend against change, whether it be his status, reputation, power, or most commonly, property. For some individuals the ownership of property may become so powerful a force in their daily lives that their conservatism of taste is transformed into a conservatism of possession. In any case the equilibrium for such individuals depends largely on what they have and hold; threats to their property or status are threats to their interests, routine, and comfort.[15]

(3) That his politics are conservative, he can be counted on to take a stand on current issues in opposition to those individuals who experiment with or alter the established order. This man has looked beyond his own comings and goings and has recognized, however fuzzily, that he is a member of a community worth defending

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[14]See Clinton Rossiter, "The New Conservatives," Harper's Magazine, April, 1957, p. 75.

[15]Ibid.

against reform and revolution. He recognizes further that such defense calls for something more than holding his own place and property, and he is ready to support men and movements dedicated to preserving his country's "way of life" - as he understands it.[16]

(4) That his mind is conservative, that he subscribes consciously to principles designed to guard the established order against careless tinkering or determined reform. This individual has a general understanding of the history, structure, ideals, and traditions of his society; the real tendencies and implications of proposals of reform; and the importance of conservatism in maintaining a stable social order. He is aware that he is a conservative, and that he must therefore think conservative thoughts as well as practice conservative politics. This variety of conservative is of a very rare nature. In a later part of this study the writer attempts to identify four other tenets which might be considered in this connection.[17]

The conservatisms of temper, taste and possession have always flourished in America, as in many other societies. Few will object to a man's calling himself a conservative in these three senses, unless, of course, he is one who delights in unorthodoxy.

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[16] Ibid., p. 76.

[17] See pages 17-18.

Having been bewildered by the tremendous growth and expansion of New Conservatism in this country, especially in the area of philosophy, the writer will concentrate the preponderance of his energies on an analysis of this particular aspect.

Even in the attempt to limit ourselves to this seemingly narrow "field" of the concept, certain difficulties are apt to arise.

(1) Since in any grouping or activity different persons may resist different changes and innovations, or resist change and innovation because of attachment to different aspects of the heritage from the past, we must not be surprised to find more than one particular connotation of conservatism in one and the same grouping or activity. In view of this we are able, therefore, to see why the term conservative is used with frequency, and other than univocally, in everyday discourse. Moreover, we should note that, as the terms can be legitimately used to describe resistance to change in any grouping, it often refers to controversies that have little significance for the entire society.[18]

(2) In that change does occur in our society -- even though the resisters appear to have their way at times -- the heritage from the past begins to take on or include elements which are merely heritage from the immediate or recent past; thereby abetting further

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[18]Willmoore Kendall and George W. Carey, "Towards a Definition of Conservatism," Journal of Politics, XXVI (May, 1964), pp. 408-11.

reasons for the multiplication of connotations of conservatism in any one grouping. Some individuals in this group will accept the newly admitted elements, and proceed to resist any attempt to alter them in the name of further progress; others may refuse to accept them and demand that they be eliminated altogether. Both contentions are clearly of a conservative nature, but with the hitherto unnoticed complication that some of our "conservatives" now differ with "progressives" not as to whether there shall be change and innovation, but as to the direction it shall take.[19]

(3) Particular conservatisms in this grouping are likely to multiply over still another set of issues, having to do with the question whether - and, if so, to what extent - conservatives see themselves as called upon to develop the "tradition" or "orthodoxy" they have received from their forebears, or, contrariwise, to hand it down to their descendants without modification or elaboration. Some demonstrably conservative utterances treat tradition or orthodoxy as if its "goodness" were exclusively a matter of its "oldness," as if that which is ancient were good merely because it is ancient, and as if that which is new, or modern, were bad merely because it is new. Others tend to emphasize the "goodness" of their tradition or orthodoxy, point to its antiquity as

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[19] Ibid.

merely attesting to that goodness and recognize, accordingly, an obligation to "moderately" reform it and cause it to grow.[20] Only the former, properly speaking, falling under those definitions of conservatism that equate it with opposition to change and innovation, often become its most ardent proponents and, as suggested above, clash with progressives over the direction in which modifications shall occur and the "principles" that are to govern them. If we were to attempt a trek upon the dangerous soil of "classification" of men we could speak of the former group as static conservatives and the latter one may be characterized as developmental conservatives.

(4) Conservative resistance may, in certain circumstances, (for example, in a society or organization or activity that at an earlier moment has passed under more or less complete control by progressive changers and innovators), express itself in the desire to overthrow the status quo and in the tradition or orthodoxy to which it points as its justification. This particular conservative may regard himself as the defender of a tradition or orthodoxy which, though it has been reduced to a mere remnant, he continues to insist upon as "the" orthodoxy appropriate to that particular organization or activity.[21]

In view of the above analysis one is led to a further query:

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

"What role has the New Conservative's philosophy in America today? Is the New Conservatism really of a conservative nature?"

According to Professor Huntington, of Harvard University, "Much of the New Conservatism is characterized by at least three deficiencies as a conservative movement."[22] The first of these is marked in the uncertainty on the part of many New Conservatives as to "what they wish to defend."[23] Some simply continue the old identification of conservatism with business liberalism. Desiring to import eighteenth century European aristocracy into twentieth century America, they dream of an age of less democracy, less equality, less industrialism; in other words, an age in which the elite would rule and the masses would not only know their places but be happy and content therein.

The second of these deficiences, as seen by Professor Huntington, is marked in many New Conservatives being "astoningly vague as to the nature and source of the threat to what they wish to conserve."[24] Historically, conservatism has basically been the response to a direct and immediate challenge. Conservatives have not usually been in doubt as to the identity of their opponents. But, according to Huntington:

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[22]Quoted in Samuel P. Huntington, "Conservatism As An Ideology," American Political Science Review, LI (June, 1957), p. 471.

[23]Ibid., p. 472.

[24]Ibid.

> Among the New Conservatives...the enemy is seldom brought clearly into focus. To some, the foe is Liberalism.... To others, it is modernism, totalitarianism, popularism. For some New Conservatives the enemy is irrationalism and to others it is rationalism.[25]

"A third deficiency of the New Conservatism," Huntington continues, "is the effort to uncover a conservative intellectual tradition in America."[26] Apparently desiring the security of identification with an intellectual movement, the New Conservatives search through America's past, resurrecting political and intellectual figures long since forgotten. This search on the part of the New Conservatives merely reflects their own uncertainty of purpose, role, and identity. They seek, in some instances, to conserve an intellectual tradition which does not exist rather than institutions which do exist. "Were they true conservatives," Huntington avers, "immediately engaged in the defense of an institution or society against a real and imminent threat, they would have little interest in establishing a conservative pedigree."[27]

Perhaps the most perplexing problem which has arisen in connection with the recent revival of interest in conservative thought is the question of its relevancy to conditions in the United States today. If we were to make an attempt at finding a fault in the New Conservative writers we might pursue their constant attempts

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[25]Ibid., p. 472. [26]Ibid., p. 473. [27]Ibid.

to state their positions in the rhetoric of eighteenth-century England. Futhermore, we might conclude that their proposals have frequently been too vague to convey their meanings adequately.

In that long discussions on the "goodness" of an aristocratic society are basically of no interest to Americans whose culture is void of such, it should not be surprising when critics question how applicable philosophical conservatism can be toward solving the controversial problems confronting a relatively new country like the United States where aristocratic values seem to be largely a part of the long-vanished past. In fact, the critics of conservatism have centered their attacks on the conservatives' interpretations of traditions and their aristocratic social philosophy.

Have the New Conservatives attempted to invent a tradition which has never existed? Has our American heritage been shot through and through with a conservative tradition just waiting to be discovered? Certainly a tradition cannot be invented. And according to some authors, it is highly unlikely that a conservative tradition will be "discovered" in America.[28]

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[28]For a further analysis of this proposition see Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition In America (New York, 1955), ch. II; John Hallowell, The Moral Foundation Of Democracy (Chicago, 1954), pp. 4-19; and Raymond English, "Conservatism And The State," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXII (November, 1956), pp. 50-65.

In spite of this, the New Conservatives of America have set out on a quest for a tradition which will serve as a model for conservatism. This quest has taken our New Conservatives outside the shores of our country and indeed right into the hands of their critics. Their journey has, however, been limited, for the most part, to Great Britain.

A brief summary of political thought shows a great many men, from various countries, with well-founded ideas of a conservative nature. In view of this fact one ponders: "Why Britain?" Having been fascinated by the writings of Edmund Burke, certain American conservatives have been led to conceive of Britain as the conservative state "par excellence".

What was there about this Englishman named Burke which led American conservatives to quote him endlessly? What was there about his nature which led Macauley to describe him as, "the greatest man since Milton."[29] What was there about his writing which has enabled him to assume a position among the "immortals" of history? Why has he become the "god" of the New Conservatives? In an attempt to answer these, among many other questions, the writer will pursue a critical inquiry into his basic political, social, and economic philosophies in the following chapter.

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[29]See Thomas Macauley, The Story of England from the Accession of James II (New York, n.d.), p. iii.

Chapter III

Edmund Burke: Main Source of "New Conservatism"

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that we need some reference point in assessing the nature and incidence of conservatism in America and England. That is, even though we confine ourselves to the general area of "philosophical" conservatism, there are even here several interpretations, each with its own orthodoxy or tradition that it seeks to preserve or advance. Consequently, our assessment of conservatism in these countries will vary, depending upon which particular conservatism we fix our attention upon. We propose to take as referent the conservatism of Edmund Burke since he is, by fairly common consent, the "father" of modern conservatism.

Before entering upon a systematic analysis of this "intellectual giant," two prefatory remarks must be made. First of all, Burke did not leave any comprehensive, generalized works. Most of his writings were directed to the particular political problems with which he was concerned (with two important early exceptions which we will discuss). Nevertheless his books and letters contain a great number of generalizations about ethical and societal problems. The approach to Burke's theories must be focused on these generalizations and on the relation between them

and the positions he took in concrete situations.

Secondly, no one claims that Burke was a "pure" conservative by any of the definitions given. Many commentators agree that he accepted elements of Liberalism and change, though his conservatism remained paramount -- as we shall see in this chapter. We shall be concerned, however, solely with the nature of his conservatism; though it is important to remember that this was not the only value base in his theories. With these reservations we may now turn to consider the nature of Burke's conservatism.

When Edmund Burke tried to influence British policy with regard to the American colonies, he refused to justify his own distinctions of right, asserting that of such distinctions he hated the very sound.[1] He referred instead to the happiness of the American people before the changes in the old colonial policy had been introduced. He stated, "These are the arguments of states and kingdoms. Leave the rest to the schools; there, only can they be discussed with safety."[2] In this particular case, it was traditional policy, Burke thought, that had made for human happiness

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[1]Edmund Burke, "Speech on American Taxation," The Works of Edmund Burke (Boston, 1866), II, p. 73. All Subsequent citations of Burke's writings refer to this edition of the collected works, unless otherwise indicated.

[2]Ibid., p. 75.

and a more recent policy that had led to oppression. This distinction, between the arguments of states and kingdoms and the argument of schools, runs throughout his speeches and letters. If we consider the two kinds of argument together, quite apart from the immediate colonial problems discussed in the speech on American taxation, we may be able to perceive a basic element of Burke's political philosophy.

While Burke said on one occasion that he never attacked "theory as such" but only "weak, erroneous, fallacious, unfinished, or imperfect theory," it is nevertheless true that he made implicit distinctions between theory and practice.[3] He stressed their different roles, and therefore their different methods and requirements.

MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Many recent writers, proclaiming Burke as a conservative, have laid tremendous stress upon the historical element in his political philosophy.[4] They have emphasized the importance of Burke's

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[3]See Burke, "Speech on a Motion for a Committee to Inquire Into the State of Representation of the Commons in Parliament," VII, p. 97.

[4]See Robert Bisset, The Life Of Edmund Burke (London, 1913), p. 19; also see John MacCunn, The Political Philosophy Of Burke (London, 1916), p. 193; and George Sabine, A History Of Political Theory (New York, 1961), pp. 607-14.

appeals to social traditions and manners, to legal prescription and laws, to his passion for liberty connected with civil order and legal justice, to his veneration of "the wisdom of our ancestors," as embodied in church and state, to his defense of the constitutional safeguards to life, liberty and property, to his praise of "prejudice" and duty as against abstract reason and rights, and to his conception of man as a civil or political animal, who finds his self-fulfillment in the "gradually unfolding corporate life of his nation."[5] By taking into account many of the most important aspects of civil society, as discussed by Burke, this view of his political philosophy has illuminated many of the most vital principles in his complex thought. In spite of these views, the writer feels that the ultimate basis of Burke's political conservatism, if it might be referred to as such, is not to be found in history, solely, but in his moral principles as well.

In order to better understand the basis of Burke's "political philosophy" his religious and ethical principles should be analyzed in conjunction with it. Prior to doing this it is necessary to understand in what sense "history is a preceptor of prudence," and why it was that Burke considered prudence to

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[5]Ibid.

be "in all things a virtue, in politics, the first of virtues."[6]

For Burke, political philosophy was the practical art of governing man as a moral agent in civil society. The politician, by Burke's definition, was "the philosopher in action," and he could never assume a priori knowledge that would enable him to attain exact mathematical certainty in the consequences of his decisions.[7] Politics he considered a part of practical reason, not theoretical reason; it was concerned with the good, not the true. He writes:

> The nature and actions of men are under general laws of moral necessity, but because the will of man is free to obey or defy the moral law, and because his social circumstances are infinitely varied, contingent matters and details there can be no general laws. ... The progressive sagacity that keeps company with times and occasions and decides upon things in their existing position, is that alone which can give true propriety, grace, and effect to a man's conduct. It is very hard to anticipate the occasion and to live by a rule more general.[8]

To Burke, "no moral questions are ever abstract questions."[9] Prudence was for Burke not an intellectual, but a moral virtue and as it was a corrective and the best positive alternative to the errors of metaphysical abstraction:

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[6]Burke, "Reflections On The Revolution In France," III, p. 345.

[7]See Peter J. Stanlis, "The Basis Of Burke's Poliitcal Conservatism," Modern Age, V (Summer, 1961), p. 265.

[8]Ibid., p. 456.

[9]Ibid., p. 457.

> Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on any moral or political subject. Pure metaphysical abstractions does belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; that demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the rules of prudence. Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all.[10]

Burke maintained that "the exercise of competent jurisdiction is a manner of moral prudence," because "moral necessity is not like metaphysical, or even physical." Tyranny was a more common abuse in government than usurpation, Burke felt, because even under legitimate legislatures, "if the rules of benignity and prudence are not observed oppressive actions may result."[11] Commenting upon the role of prudence in the political arena Peter J. Stanlis states:

> Prudence, or a strict regard for circumstances, is not merely a matter of empirical observation and intellectual calculations; it is morally imperative to regard circumstances, because otherwise political action could mortally injure those whom the statesman wishes to serve.[12]

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[10]Burke, "Speech On Conciliation With The Colonies In America," II, p. 170.

[11]Burke, "Thoughts On The Causes Of The Present Discontents," I, p. 440.

[12]Stanlis, op. cit., p. 266.

To Burke, prudence was part of God's "divine tactic" fulfilled in man's moral temperance and political tact. Understood in this profoundly Aristotelian sense, Burke's principle of prudence is nothing less than the universal, eternal and unchangeable "natural law" applied in practice through politics to each particular man, at every moment and in all circumstances, under the constitutional sovereignty of various nations.[13] Since "the situation of man is the preceptor of his duty," prudence tells us when we should "abate our demands in favor of moderation and justice, and tenderness to individuals. Prudence is not calculation, but the moral discretion which enables men to live by the spirit of the moral law."[14]

NATURE OF THE STATE

For Burke, as for Plato, the original foundation of the community, in the "state of nature," is the "natural affection" of its members for each other, growing out of the familistic origin of the society.[15] The affection of the individuals is not only for

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[13]See Burke, "Conciliation," II, p. 104.

[14]Ibid., p. 170.

[15]Edmund Burke, "Reflections On The Revolution In France," The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke (London, n. d.), III, pp. 333-39.

each other but also is directed to the "love and veneration of the whole." The reason why tradition is such an important element in the unity of the community is that it takes time to cement a "union of minds" and to build "contending principles into a consistent whole."[16] This helps make clear what his basic attitude was towards tradition. Its basic purpose was to build harmony out of societal conflicts. It was this harmony which he saw in medieval tradition (which we will analyze later in this study) and it was for this reason that he could not support tradition when it lost the capacity to harmonize. But when harmony becomes embodied in tradition its purpose is reenforced because of the tendency of repeated usage itself to promote tranquility. Tradition is thus conceived in a similar perspective to the natural law. Burke stated, "These links of affection, kinship, and tradition can be as strong as links of iron."[17] Affection and tradition were the social and intellectual bases of the community, as the common economic interest to which he often referred was the material base.

The political community was formed by an original primitive agreement of families.[18] It is held together by a

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Burke, "Natural Society," Writings, I, p. 11.

[18] Ibid., p. 13.

chain of subordination in which each man must play the part assigned to him by God.[19] The chain consists of the class divisions of society and each class must have its hereditary privileges protected against the potential conflicts of diverse interests.[20] The most vital class in the community, according to Burke, is the "natural aristocracy," which is the "soul" of the community. The deciding should rest with this natural leadership because without it this "natural harmony" and this "beautiful order" becomes a mere collection of "mere vagabonds."[21]

Majority rule, according to Burke, is not the natural state of man because it "presupposes an agreement by the political 'corporation' of society to accept majority decisions as binding."[22] The political community must exist before any majority rule agreement, and it is therefore superior to any claims of political natural rights. Thus, while the consent of the community to the government decisions is desirable authority will be based on obedience rather than force. The people may be presumed to consent to "whatever benefits them," and actual consent is void if it is con-

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[19]Burke, "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," Writings, IV, p. 165.

[20]Burke, "Reflections," Writings, III, p. 292.

[21]Burke, "Appeal," Writings, IV, p. 174.

[22]Ibid., p. 170.

trary to the order of God.[23] Similarly, the desires of the people need not be heeded when they violate the rules of justice.[24] Long usage and "flourishing conditions" are presumptuous against change, for tradition indicates the choice of generations of the species which is wiser than the individual."[25]

The concept of harmony proves to be the overriding ingredient which gives substance to his expressions of "justice," "the order of God," "long usuage" and that which "benefits" the people. It was these "cohesive" elements which he wanted to conserve above all. The shift from a partial natural rights theory to the idea of the traditional rights of Englishmen was simply part of his search for a more dependable way of preventing freedom from disrupting this supremely important "conservative" community. He had little to say about the territorial basis of the state beyond emphasizing that its subdivisions should be based on long historical and traditional development.

A tremendous amount of disagreement has seemingly developed among the ranks of the intellectuals concerning Burke's views toward the natural law. It would take us too far afield to analyze the details of this conflict. But, a few points should be noted. Since it is well known that Burke was an enemy of the

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[23] Ibid., p. 166.

[24] Burke, "Popery," Writings, VI, p. 20.

[25] Burke, "Reform," Writings, II, p. 271.

revolutionary "rights of man" doctrine, "utilitarian" writers assumed that Burke rejected the whole tradition of natural law in favor of expediency, social utility and an appeal to history. Even George Sabine perpetuated this trend of thought by writing:

> Burke made an important contribution to the nineteenth century proposal to replace the system of natural law. ... In a sense Burke showed precisely ... the reaction that was to follow upon Hume's destruction of the eternal verities of reason and natural law. ... It is true that he never denied the reality of natural rights. ... However, like Hume, he believed that they were purely conventional.... They arise not from anything belonging to nature or to the human species at large, but solely from civil society. ... Accordingly, Burke not only cleared away, as Hume had done, the pretense that social institutions depend on reason or nature but far more than Hume he reversed the scheme of values implied by the system of natural law.[26]

Some recent studies have argued that, far from being an enemy of natural law, Burke was, in principle and practice, one of the most eloquent and profound defenders of natural law, morality and politics in Western civilization. In 1949, in the preface of his Burke's Politics, Ross Hoffman took issue with all previous scholars in the utilitarian tradition by writing:

> Burke's politics ... were grounded on recognition of the universal natural law of reason and justice ordained by God as the foundation of a good community. In this recognition the Machiavellian schism

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[26]Quoted in George Sabine, A History Of Political Theory (New York, 1961), p. 608.

> between politics and morality is closed, and it is exactly in this respect that Burke stands apart from the modern positivists and pragmatists, who in claiming him have diminished him. His thought, to be sure, worked mostly on concrete and practical questions and he was not fond of adverting to first principles of public morality; but affirmation of the natural law is implicit in all his works, and when he criticized radically -- when he attacked at the roots such heinous systems as the anti-Catholic penal code of Ireland and the tyrannical rule of Hastings in Bengal -- it became explicit.[27]

Professor Hoffman was among the first scholars to state in print that the foundations of Burke's political philosophy rested upon the natural law. Since that time numerous authors have attempted to prove his thesis to the maximum degree.

"In Burke's politics," according to Stanlis, "prescription is to law what tradition and custom are to manners, what revelation is to religion and right is to morality." "The natural law," he continues, "is the foundation for Burke's conception of international and constitutional law, of human nature, of Church and State, and of his principles of moral prudence, legal prescription and political sovereignty. As the ethical standard in all human contract, the Natural Law of God supplied Burke with his conviction that the greatest and best gift of God to man was government."[28]

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[27]Quoted in Ross Hoffman, Burke's Politics (New York, 1949), p. xv.

[28]Stanlis, op. cit., p. 273.

One of the most recent books on Burke's political philosophy, Francis Canavan's The Political Reason of Edmund Burke, states:

> There is not to be found in Burke's writing a formal treatise on the natural law ... but the doctrine is alluded to throughout his works and furnishes the premises of his most profound arguments.[29]

In opposition to those who have contended that Burke's method of handling political problems proves he was a pragmatist, Canavan's book shows that Burke's characteristic use of political reason conforms with the self-evident norms of the natural law.

Another less dissident element of Burke's nature of the state is reflected in his unpalatable disdain for innovation. "Example," he said, in "Thoughts On The Causes Of The Present Discontent," "is the only argument of effect in civil life."[30] To consult "invention" rather than "experience," he said in speaking of American affairs, "is diametrically of good sense established among mankind."[31] He condemned the French Revolution as a "revolution of innovation," and his correspondent in Ireland affairs was urged to "innovate as little as possible upon speculation when

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[29]Quoted in Francis Canavan, The Political Reason of Edmund Burke (Durham, N. C., 1960), p. ii.

[30]Cited in Burke, "Present Discontent," Works, I, p. 499.

[31]Cited in Burke, "American Taxation," Works, II, p. 8.

there is no material inconvenience."[32]

In his "Letter To A Noble Lord," Burke distinguished between change and reform. He regarded change as coming from new and different principles of government, as inventitive, dangerous, and resulting from a confusion between theory and practice. Reform, on the contrary, was healing and mediatorial. It did not therefore pass farther out of experience than necessary.[33]

In that experience is an intermittent factor in the New Conservative philosophy, perhaps we should probe more deeply into Burke's interpretation of it. Burke conceived of "personal experience" as the "best, though not the only schooling for the prudent statesman."[34] He further recommended "rather a large converse with men and much intercourse in life than deep study of books."[35] He thought of experience as a source of political education, and that source was considered most reliable when it was personal.

Experience and invention were by no means confined to the political value of cumulative and personal experience. The inexperienced man was considered by Burke "a danger to political

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[32]Cited in Burke, "Letter To A Peer Of Ireland," Works, IV, p. 237.

[33]Cited in Burke, "Letter To A Noble Lord," Works, IX, p. 358.

[34]See Burke, "Impeachment Of Warren Hastings," Works, IX, p. 357.

[35]Ibid., p. 358.

life," not only because the most fruitful source of political understanding is not yet open to him, but also because novelty, which meets with a warm response in men generally and appeals to their love of adventure, is a grave temptation to the inexperienced. While all men have this love of adventure, the impact of novel ideas is more likely to be cushioned in the case of experienced statesmen.[36]

The mind which admires concreteness, finds experience a strong asset to statesmanship, and fears innovation in politics, might logically distinguish the conventionality of the statesman from the refinement of much political thinking. Since political thinking is designed to answer questions in a more refined manner than "common sense," some refinement may be presumed virtuous in theory. "Refined policy," according to Burke, "causes man to lose sight of the good objects of government, and causes confusion."[37] Refinement may even be considered a "refinement in justice," which Burke found in the "philosophy of this enlightened age,"[38]

"Plain good intention," on the other hand, was a reasonably reliable political criterion for Burke. This principle seems

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[36]See Burke, "Appeal," Works, IV, p. 76.

[37]Cited in Burke, "Revolution," Works, III, p. 417.

[38]Cited in Burke, "Present Discontents," Works, I, p. 476.

to introduce a "democratic" element in Burke's thought. He had great disdain for manipulated opinion, but a profound regard for plain principles and practices in political life. He thought the common people had a special function in understanding those who implicitly repudiated the notion of the legislative genius. The reasoning required for free government is of a "coarse texture," "rustic," "manly," and "plain" -- these seem to have been his favorite expressions of description. Burke considered plainness not only a political virtue, but the special virtue of the British House of Commons.[39]

THE FEUDAL TRADITION

If we are to consider Burke a "true" Conservative, by any stretch of the imagination, we come closer to the truth if we adopt the position that it was specifically the medieval tradition, modified by the Whig Revolution, which he was striving to preserve. When he was trying to find a program of reform for France, as the alternative to Revolution, he said that "if France could not have drawn its true traditions from the last generation it should have looked to an earlier generation for its model. With this tradition as the model for reform, it could have avoided the catastrophe of the Revo-

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[39]Burke, "Warren Hastings," Works, XI, p. 170.

lution."[40] He further postulates that "if its true traditions were still not discernible in the earlier generation, then France should have looked to Britain, which had kept alive the ancient common law of Europe and improved it to its present state."[41] Having made these recommendations, Burke went on to lament the passing of the age of chivalry, loyalty to rank, and loyalty to nobility, for these, he said, "had given modern Europe its distinctive character, setting it apart from Asia and classical antiquity."[42] He further emphasized that "the foundations of European civilization lay in feudal law, manners, classes, religion, and universities."[43] It was the feudal "spirit of fealty" that freed kings and subjects from tyranny and set the basis for Europe's later prosperity. Contrary to Huntington's interpretation, he also made it clear that his loyalty was to the medieval tradition first and to modern commercial capitalism only secondly, for he claimed that commerce was only the effect of the spirit of feudalism, and that "nobility" could, in any event, compensate even for the absence of commerce.[45]

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[40]Burke, "Letters On A Regicide Peace," Writings, V, p. 310.

[41]Ibid., p. 312.

[42]Burke, "Reflections," Writings, III, p. 278.

[43]Ibid., p. 279.

[44]Ibid., p. 331.

[45]Ibid., p. 332.

Nevertheless, he seems to have been aware (as shown in his writings) that he could not hold consistently to this medievalist position. He recognized that the feudal tradition of the late Middle Ages was itself a violation of the tradition of the early Middle Ages and that the transition had frequently been accomplished by force. "Feudalism itself," he said, "was very unsettled at the time of the Norman Conquest because the gentry were interested in nothing but war. Hence their support of the unfounded claims of William."[46] It was only after many years that the Normans became "softened into the English" and the conquerors "blended with the conquered."[47] He further maintained that the acceptance of this settlement over a long period of time had produced a mild authority based on tradition and that this was far better than the harsh French revolutionary authority which required continued force to protect the new property system.[48]

THEORY OF SOCIAL ORDER

The social order which Burke defended was, to a large extent, commercial, and it was increasingly becoming industrial. The eighteenth century had seen the rise of the Bank of England,

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[46]Burke, "An Essay Towards An Abridgement Of English History," Writings, VII, p. 333.

[47]Burke, "Hercules Langrishe," Writings, IV, p. 272.

[48]Burke, "Reflections" Writings, III, p. 528.

the South Sea Bubble, joint stock companies, expanding shipping and trade, the accumulation of commercial fortunes and industrial capital, a rash of industrial inventions, and the steady growth of manufacturing. Commerce was the "dominant factor" in eighteenth-century England.[49] Professor Huntington states: "For thirty years before Burke arrived in London in 1750 the promotion of industry had been a primary objective of the English government. By 1790, when, according to the aristocratic theory of conservatism, Burke was defending the feudal corporate order, the Industrial Revolution in England was already a generation old."[50]

As early as 1770 Burke stated his position on this matter quite dogmatically: "There is no such thing as the landed interest separate from the trading interest. ... Turn your land into trade."[51] Though he appears to have possessed nothing short of scorn and disdain for financiers, the rising capitalist class, and the Jews, he was able to recognize that landed pro-

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[49]See L. B. Namier, England In The Age Of The American Revolution (London, 1930), pp. 15, 38, 40.

[50]Cited in Samuel P. Huntington, "Conservatism As An Ideology," American Political Science Review, LI (June, 1957), p. 462.

[51]See Burke, "French Revolution," Works, III, p. 240.

perty established the "firm base of every stable government." He thereby concluded that the very wealty must be "out of all proportion, predominate in the representation."[52]

A man with a thousand acres should not have ten times the political voice of a man with a hundred acres, but twenty or thirty times the authority of his poorer neighbor. This was the case not because ability and property went together -- the reverse was true. According to Burke:

> Ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert and timid, it can never be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominate in the representation.[53]

Still another practical suggestion stated by Burke was the exclusion of eighty-five percent of all adult males from any active participation in politics. He computed that one out of seven might have sufficient independence, education, and leisure to vote intelligently. All salaried persons without independent incomes would be excluded. Not that Burke would have granted the vote to this minority as a "right," he only conceded that extensive participation might fall within "natural limits,"

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[52] Ibid., p. 241.

[53] Ibid.

and thus be compatible with civilized government.[54]

Francis Canavan, in his Political Reason Of Edmund Burke, interprets this line of thought thusly:

> The thesis...was directed against the natural rights school of political thought and was in effect a denial that the natural rights of men, by themselves, furnished an adequate standard for determining the rights of men in society. Since society was 'wholly artificial,' said Burke, the rights of civil, social man were a question of 'convenience' and not simply of abstract truth.[55]

The writer has not presented Burke "tout ensemble," nor has he done him justice. As stated previously, Burke did not leave any comprehensive, generalized works. He was a complex and brilliant figure. To have enumerated the extent and variety of Burke's appeals to the different facets of his thought considered herein would have been far beyond the scope of this study. The writer has attempted to establish the basic concepts of Burke which have proved to be essential "rallying points" for the "New American Conservatives."

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[54]Burke, "Conciliation," Works, II, p. 172.

[55]Quoted in Canavan, op. cit., p. 63.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE BASIC PHILOSOPHIES OF THREE LEADING PROPONENTS OF "NEW CONSERVATISM" IN AMERICA

> A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and time in which it is used.
>
> Justice Holmes

For the first few years after World War II, the conservatives appeared to have been a quite dispirited group, convinced more than ever that the nation had passed its peak and that, as the federal bureaucracy swelled, all would get worse at an even faster rate. The Truman Administration was no more liberal than the conservatives expected it to be. Apparently what they did not expect, or hoped would not happen, was that the Eisenhower Administration would fail altogether to start dismantling the welfare state.[1] This was only one of the "grande marche" of events which prepared well the favorable reception of a conservative approach to a "New Conservative" thought in America. Other contributing factors, according to Philip Chapman, were: the refusal of the

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[1] Joseph Roddy, "What Is A Liberal? What Is A Conservative?" Look, XXVII (July 28, 1964), p. 21.

Soviet Union to permit or accept an enduring peace; the disasters of Eastern Europe; the "anti-communist" hysteria; the decline of New and Fair Deal enthusiam; and the inability of certain intellectuals to recognize the tyrannical nature of Stalin's Russia.[2] He advances his theory even further by stating:

> The outbreak of war in Korea and then the Eisenhower victory in 1952 served to intensify the belief of many that the American mind had reached crossroads, had lost patience with 'naive liberalism,' and that a slow ponderous and epoch-making change of course was in the offering.[3]

The call for the conservatives of the country to unite went out with the warning that otherwise they would have nothing left to lose before they got chained into Socialist slavery. The response, though, slow at first, seemed sustained. Self-professed conservatives are now numerous, energetic, articulate and full of conflicting accounts of what they stand for. Yet they are loosely assembled in a restless political force camped outside and within the movable walls of the GOP and hard across the Right Wing of the Democratic Party. Contrary to the con-

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[2]Cited in Philip C. Chapman, "The New Conservatism" Political Science Quarterly, LXXV (March, 1960), p. 17.

[3]Ibid., p. 19.

servatives of 1789, who had doubts about giving every freeman the franchise, the "New Conservatives," of 1965, generally share the belief that they must give the franchised something better than a choice between Republican and Democratic liberals.[4]

In the wake of the forementioned encounters and occurences, a small, unorganized, academic group began to seek a "new" conservative philosophy; the names of Russell Kirk, Peter Viereck and Willmoore Kendall immediately spring to mind. The movement has probably been the most stimulating element in contemporary political thought. This small vanguard tends to concentrate the bulk of its activities on the critical rejection of liberal and socialist assumptions and achievements.

We should not dare, even for a moment, to assume that this type of "intellectual revolution" is peculiar to America. Conservatism in the general sense of resistance to change and reliance on habit and tradition is the social-psychological attitudes most typical of mankind in the whole course of history. Only when the "cake of custom" is broken, only when a society moves from "status to contract" do experiments, individualism, and revolution become fashionable. In such circumstances philosophical or reflective conservatism is most likely to exist. It

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[4]See Roddy, op. cit., p. 20.

has no function in a society in which men are automatically conservative; nor has it any place in a system in which violence, fear, and thought-control have displaced both tradition and the optimistic experiments of liberal democracy.[5] One writer states the case thusly:

> Phiosophical conservatism is...the normal intellectual reaction to the diseases of high political civilization; it is a conscious corrective to liberalism and democracy and their consequences, an effort to rediscover the foundations of rational freedom and sane authority, and an awareness that liberal generalizations have neglected certain facts about man, society, and government.[6]

As a means of understanding the overriding assumptions inherent in this "intellectual revolution," it seems necessary that we analyze some of the basic philosophies of at least three of the leading "New Conservatives." The publication, in 1949, of Peter Viereck's Conservatism Revisited, which was given an enthusiastic and cordial welcome on all sides, seems to have triggered the output of a long series of articles in the academic journals, magazines, books, and reviews about other books, written from a similar point if view. In 1951, Russell Kirk's Randolph of Roanoke appeared, to be followed in 1955 by The Conservative

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[5]See Jasper B. Shannon, "Conservatism," Annals of the American Academy, CCCXLIV (November, 1962), p. 5.

[6]Ibid.

Mind. In 1954 he came forward with a Program For Conservatives, and later (1956) Beyond The Dreams Of Avarice. Viereck's conservative ideas received further development in his Shame And Glory Of The Intellectuals (1953), The Unadjusted Man (1956), and Conservatism: From John Adams To Churchill (1956). Willmoore Kendall, a late-comer to this school in publications, contributed greatly to its "staying power" in 1959 with his John Locke And The Doctrine Of Majority Rule, and The Conservative Affirmation (1964). Still another late-comer to this school is William F. Buckley, Jr. and his Up From Liberalism (1959), and, in co-authorship with the editors of National Review, The Committee And Its Critics.

Peter Viereck's mind is one which dares to be challenged and one which an analyst would best avoid. No systematic political philosopher, no well-organized examiner of ideologies, Viereck is a "garden-variety" philosopher who presents his conservative faith against a backdrop of commentary on twentieth century man. Yet, his conservative exposition is germane in many ways to a discussion of New Conservatism in America.

Many familiar elements of conservative temperament appear throughout Viereck's work, such as: the ideas of public service, decorum, noblesse oblige, the moral restraints of tra-

dition, the inner grace to be able to face calamity, the need to experience ethical restraints for long periods of history in order to make them effective, the primacy of morality over economics because economic ambitions are disruptive while ethical aspirations are cohesive, a tendency to "concreteness" and the burden on those who propose innovations. His most brief and concise summary of the conservative faith is captivating in its simplicity and eloquence:

> The conservative principles 'par excellence' are proportion and measure; self-expression through reform; humanism and classical balance; a fruitful nostalgia for the permanent beneath the flux; and a fruitful obsession for unbroken historic continuity. These principles together create freedom, a freedom built not on the quicksand of adolescent defiance but on the bedrock of ethics and law.[7]

But, Viereck goes on to say, "there is no such thing as pure conservatism" and he, from there, tends to range from admixture with Liberalism at one pole, to influence from authoritarianism at the other. He rejects German organismic ideologies and Maistrean Conservatism. The continental conservative for whom he has most respect is Metternich, whom he portrays as a Burkean who understood that nineteenth century Europe needed repose above all, and that only an "inner balance" could resist

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[7]Cited in Peter Viereck, Conservatism Revisited (New York, 1949), p. 6.

the "pull toward extremes."[8] He also retains respect for Burke because he, among other things, "understood the possibilities of self-discipline and hence of freedom."[9]

To understand Viereck's values fully, perhaps we should mention the things that he omits as well as those that he includes of the societal elements. Viereck emphasizes only the concepts of community and the supremacy of social power. He does not appear concerned with functional harmony, nor is he concerned with minimizing material desires. He has some praise for the material achievements of industrialization. But, he specifically rejects the concept of aristocracy. "Aristocracy," he says, "is functionless in modern society; it is only the aristocratic spirit which is precious."[10]

Viereck prefers to identify himself with the reformist, rather than the traditionalist side of Burke, and the late Winston Churchill is his current model. He criticizes Burke for choosing between contradictory traditions sometimes on the basis of natural rights and sometimes simply because of the an-

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[8] Ibid., p. 137.

[9] Ibid., p. 150.

[10] Ibid., p. 15.

tiquity of their roots.[11] In fact, Viereck goes so far in preferring the reformist spirit of "Tory democracy" that he strongly recommends cooperation with democratic socialists in Europe, and, if necessary, the adoption of segments of their program.[12] But his adjustment to Liberal democracy is not simply a consequence of the need for a common front against totalitarianism or even to the fact that transitional periods of history are "always uncomfortable for Conservatism."[13] He is prepared to admit that both the conservative and liberal impulses are equally basic to human thinking and that the debate between them is therefore endless.[14] He further feels that conservatism is not an ideology but a "way of thinking."[15] He even ventures so far as to state that "conservatism is best when it serves a Liberal party."[16] In view of these thoughts we will not find it surprising to discover later in this study that he is pointedly rejected by Kirk's conservatism. "Without the liberal tradition," he further states, "there will be nothing left to conserve."[17]

Viereck's analysis of the social structure is especially interesting. He not only criticizes the contemporary emphasis

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[11] Ibid., p. 28. [12] Ibid., p. 16.

[13] Ibid., p. 108.

[14] Peter Viereck, The Unadjusted Man (Boston, 1956), p. 13.

[15] Ibid., p. 238. [16] Ibid., p. 104. [17] Ibid., p. 39.

on group adjustment but says bluntly that the "current anti-materialism also is being sold like a cellophane-wrapped commodity."[18] He dismisses talk of a restoration of Christian unity as absurd and regressive. The "return of religion" is considered by Viereck, "a parlor fad."[19] Distinctions in social strata prove to Viereck that the upper classes act, along with other "rooted" institutions, as "the props that make men good."[20] Such devices as monarchy, aristocracy, church property, constitution, and Supreme Court comprise "society's traditional restrictions on the ego ... which fit man into a stable, durable, framework. ..."[21]

In expressing his views on civil liberties, Viereck shows profound reverence for the necessity and sanctity of law. For him the "general laws" must be supreme over the particular ego of any individual or class or state."[22] "Conservatism," according to Viereck, "belongs to society as a whole, for its purpose is to conserve the values needed by society as a whole. Conservatism is betrayed when it becomes the exclusive property of a single social or economic minority."[23]

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[18]Peter Viereck, The Unadjusted Man (Boston, 1956), p. 9.

[19]Peter Viereck, Shame And Glory Of The Intellectuals (Boston, 1953), p. 47.

[20]Peter Viereck, Conservatism From John Adams To Churchill (New York, 1956), p. 14.

[21]Ibid., p. 15. [22]Ibid., p. 10. [23]Ibid.

Though possessing "rocklike" qualities, conservatism also creates freedom in that it makes possible orderly change, that is, change which does not destroy tradition. Viereck further avers that it creates freedom by preserving the individual as opposed to mass man. He states:

> What we need, and what a humanistic, non-utilitarian education will foster, is a century of the individual man. Such a century would no longer change persons into masses but masses into persons, each with a sense of his ethical duties to balance his material rights.[24]

As a means of further emphasizing the relative importance of his convictions Viereck draws an analogy between liberals and conservatives. He states that the psychological difference between the two is the "split between those who trust the 'natural goodness' of man and primarily want to release it from outer restraints, and those who fear its 'natural' caveman propensities and want to check it with inner restraints."[25]

When Russell Kirk's book, The Conservative Mind From Burke To Santayana, appeared in 1953, the revivified spirit of conservatism was brought into full public view. A

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[24] Ibid., p. 24.

[25] Ibid.

flourish of articles, both pro and con the New Conservatism as Kirk presented it, has kept the reader occupied; the debate between Kirk and his critics, however, has thus far remained a war of attrition. Responding to the battle cry, Kirk has published three more relevant books and a number of articles, which will be noted below in defense of his position.

Noting, as many do, the distaste which conservatives feel toward dogmatic statements of philosophy, Kirk lists six canons which any conservative in the tradition of Edmund Burke, Kirk says, will avow:

> (1) Belief that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty which links great and obscure, living and dead. A narrow rationality ... cannot of itself satisfy human needs. ... Politics is the art of apprehending and applying Justice which is above nature.
> (2) Affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life, as distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and equalitarianism and utilitarian aims of most radical systems. ...
> (3) Conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes. The only true equality is moral equality; all other attempts at levelling lead to despair, if enforced by positive legislation. Society longs for leadership, and if a people destroy natural distinctions among men, presently Buonaparte fills the vacuum.
> (4) Persuasion that property and freedom are inseparably connected, and that economic levelling is not economic progress. Separate property from private possession, and liberty is erased.
> (5) Faith in prescription and distrust of sophisters and calculators. Man must put control upon his

> will and his appetite, for conservatives know man to be governed more by emotion than by reason.
> (6) Recognition that change and reform are not identical; and that innovation is a devouring conflagration more often than it is a torch of progress. Society must alter, for slow change is the means of its conservation;... but Providence is the proper instrument for change....[26]

Kirk admits that "deviations from this system of ideas have occurred, and there are numerous appendages to it; but in general conservatives have adhered to these articles of belief with a consistency rare in political history."[27]

In stating his views on the New Conservative and change Kirk avers, "The intelligent conservative does not set his face against all reform. Prudent social change is the means for renewing a society's vitality, much as the human body is perpetually renewing itself, and yet retains its identity. Without judicious change, we perish."[28] "But," he further states, "change itself cannot be the end of existence; without permanence, we perish. Burke's standard of statesmanship was the union in one man of a disposition to preserve and an ability to reform."[29]

In his attempt to give a more precise statement of what the conservative wants to conserve he states:

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[26]Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind From Burke To Santayana (New York, 1953), p. 7.

[27]Ibid., p. 8. [28]Ibid., p. 13. [29]Ibid., p. 14.

> First of all, he wants to keep humanity human. ...
>
> Second, the conservative seeks to protect the elaborate, civil social edifice which, under Providence, has developed in America -- our government of laws and not of men, our economy characterized by volition rather than compulsion, our institutions calculated to make a man his own master, our political system which prefers variety to centralized uniformity. ...
>
> Third, the conservative seeks to protect that heritage of civilization which the painful labor of numberless generations of men has bequeated to us, and which is now menaced by fanaticism and the craze for the new.[29]

"Freedom is increasingly endangered: the freedom of the few, and also, in the long run, the freedom of the many," according to Kirk.[30] He further expounds the proposition that "we shall be unable to maintain any successful defense of our freedoms until we recognize once more those principles of order under which freedom in our tradition -- the body of rights and privileges acquired gradually through many centuries of English and American social experience -- acquired real meaning."[31]

Kirk gives to us a metaphysically oriented definition of order. "Order," he defines as, "the realization of a body of transcendent values -- indeed, a hierachy of values -- which give pur-

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Russell Kirk, Beyond The Dreams Of Avarice (Chicago, 1956), p. 166.

[31] Ibid.

pose to existence and motive to conduct." He later defines it more explicitly as "the harmonious arrangement of classes and functions which guards justice and gives willing consent to law and insures that we all shall be safe together."[32]

Moral order, according to Kirk's philosophy, serves as the primary element of any coherent and beneficial freedom. It must accord with principles, religious in origin, that establish a hierarchy of values and set bounds to the ego. The "check of social order" serves as the second basic ingredient of Kirk's coherent and beneficent freedom. It must accord with a rule of law, regular in its operation, that recognizes and enforces prescriptive rights, protects minorities against majorities and majorities against minorities, and gives some meaning to the idea of human dignity. Kirk also emphasizes that "freedom, as realized in the prescriptive, separate, limited, balanced, well-defined rights of persons and groups, operating within a state governed by moral principles, is the quality which makes it possible for men to become truly human."[33]

Having considered two New Conservatives' views which might be conceived of as representative of the two extremes of this "movement" let us now turn our attention to a "member" who

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[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 170.

might be considered an occupant of the "middle-of-the-road" in his views -- Willmoore Kendall. In his opening pages of The Conservative Affirmation, Kendall gives a basic summary of his conservative views. He writes that he has "no axe to grind for 'aristocracy,' no quarrel (any more than had the authors of the Federalist) with America's commitment to 'democracy,' no flirtation with the idea that the way to have a government of laws is to somehow get men out of the picture."[34] He further asserts that he "views the pre-1789 John Adams with suspicion not reverence, shies off vast reaches of the argument of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, and deplores the pre-Federalist writings of even Alexander Hamilton."[35] With Madison and Hamilton, and with the subsequent American political tradition as a whole, he expounds the conviction that the United States, "because of the qualities of its people, must and should be governed by the 'deliberate sense of the community.'"[36]

In answer to the question: "What is Conservatism?" he states, "Conservatism is... first and foremost the resistance to that Liberal revolution." He further clarifies this answer by

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[34]Willmoore Kendall, The Conservative Affirmation (Chicago, 1963), p. ix.

[35]Ibid., p. x.

[36]Ibid., p. 10.

stating to the Liberal, "This advance on your part we intend to reverse; here on the line we intend not merely to resist but to drive you back."[37] At first glance this definition leads us to believe that Kendall is a hard-core, staunch conservative -- possibly a radical. He attempts to further clarify his position by amplifying his view in the following manner:

> Conservatism distinguishes between 'change' directed at the development and perfection of our heritage as that which it is, and 'change' calculated to transform that heritage into that which it is not; and far from opposing the former, stands forth as its champion.... Conservatism opposes not 'change' but 'change' in certain directions that it condemns on grounds of inherited principle -- inherited principle, however, which it values not merely or even primarily because it is inherited, but because it is the product of rational deliberation moving from sound political and moral premises.[38]

Kendall disassociates himself from the more dissident elements of the "New Conservative" movement by accepting change which has been subjected to "rational deliberation." He refuses to subscribe to the belief that an hereditary element is virtuous simply because it "was good for them." In so doing he represents the sense of moderation in the "New Conservative" movement.

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[37] Ibid., p. 11.

[38] Ibid., p. ix.

In so stating he makes it crystal clear that his idea of conservatism maintains a certain degree of flexibility. This flexibility, however, does not lend itself to be stretched out of proportion or to an unidentifiable extreme form. Our original heritage should be recognizable throughout the transformation administered it by "heretics" and its fundamental moral and political qualities should outshine all others in the final product.

In describing his concept of tradition Kendall writes:

> We must assume ... that we most accurately identify the tradition ... by seeking out those notions of good and evil that survive through all the changes, so that we are nearest to the core of the tradition when we touch upon those beliefs and commitments and notions of good and evil that a) have perdued in recognizable form over the longest period of time, and b) have proved themselves genuine by being consistently acted upon and at the margin, fought for. Fought for ... against enemies beyond the gates of our Civilization, whom by a long tradition and with strict accuracy we call barbarians, and now against enemies within the gates, whom by a long tradition we call heretics.[39]

Here again Kendall amplifies the elasticity of his brand of conservatism. Those qualities in our tradition which have exemplified the greatest degree of perseverance and steadfastness should serve as the foundation of our tradition. He candidly refers to the

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[39]Willmoore Kendall and Mulford Q. Sibley, War & The Use Of Force; Moral Or Immoral, Christian Or Unchristian (Denver, 1959), p. 7.

adversaries of our tradition as "heretics." The heretic, according to Kendall, "is the man insufficiently civilized to understand...the complex of propositions that make up orthodox Christianity."[40] In describing the heretic further he writes:

> He is not ... an unbeliever. The heretic believes, but believes only a portion of the Deposit of Faith; and he believes this portion to the exclusion of that because he is temperamentally or intellectually incapable of getting hold of that fusion of opposites that is the fulness of the Christian Faith.[41]

In a debate at Stanford University Willmoore Kendall presented the basis of his concept of the preservation of the state in the following manner:

> A state which will not wage war in any circumstances, however serious, would condemn itself ... to extinction. Now: if the natural law demanded that, then God, who is the Author of the natural law, would both will and not will political society. He would will its end, and at the same time forbid it the means necessary for attaining that end, and we say 'necessary' because the state that cannot protect the life, liberty, and property of its citizens fails in its appointed function.[42]

The state which finds itself totally engulfed in a realm of contentedness and passivity without the means nor the desire to attain the

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[40] Ibid., p. 8. [41] Ibid.

[42] Kendall and Sibley, op. cit., p. 10.

means necessary to preserve its status quo is a doomed nation. Kendall, in the tradition of many advocates of the "New Conservatism," finds refuge for his theory of the preservation of the state in "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God." The protection of the free energies of free individuals, so that they might, in liberty, strive to live according to those laws, is of intimate concern to him. He doesn't fail to realize that in the defense of liberty a properly constituted state is necessary not only to "establish Justice and insure domestic Tranquility" but also to "provide for the common Defense."

In the area of civil rights Kendall seems to take a liberal stand in that he suggests that we should iron out inequalities of representation in Congress, since these, theoretically at least, are capable of substituting the will of a minority for that of the majority.[43] He further suggests that we assure equal representation and thus genuine majority mandates, by enacting ever stronger "civil rights" legislation calculated to prevent the white southerners from disfranchising or intimidating potential Negro voters, and by putting the Department of Justice permanently into the business of enforcing the strengthened civil rights.[44] As a means of further clarification of this stand he resorts to the words of Jean Jacques Rousseau in stating: "Man ... was ... born 'free,' and without law; he can be bound

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[43]Willmoore Kendall, The Conservative Affirmation (Chicago, 1963), p. 25.

[44]Ibid.

only by his own consent; and since today we find him 'bound' by society and law, his bondage is either wrongful, because it is not based on his consent or it is based upon agreement and contract. ... Agreement, then is the sole creator of society, of justice, or right, and wrong. ..."[45] In adding the religious element, which is highly indicative of the "New Conservative" mind, Kendall refers to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas:

> Even if I knew infallibly, even if I knew by a Revelation of God that my efforts to save my father's death, it would not affect my obligation to try to keep him alive. In a word: God's will for me would remain what it was before the Revelation, namely, that I live up to my obligations. God may have willed the destruction of the planet in an atomic Gotterdammerung (I do not know, of course, and can never know); but 'we' are involved, to fulfill our duties in all their concreteness and detail. That preserving ... is God's will for us. ...[46]

Herein has been presented the basic philosophies of three of the leading proponents of the New Conservatism. We have seen that this new school covers a vast admixture of considerations in the areas to which we have limited ourselves in this study. Kirk, and Kendall to a certain degree, have attempted to present relatively concise summaries of the conservative faith, while Viereck, in his own style of social critic,

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Kendall and Sibley, op. cit., p. 14.

has exhibited much concern for a restatement of conservative principles. This examination of conservative principles has revealed that contemporary conservatives are concerned with proper notions of human nature, religion, the past, change, property, civil liberties, and the ills and challenges which beset modern American society. The following chapter will, therefore, proceed from an exposition of these principles to a critique of the dissension which appears in the three aforementioned "New Conservatives."

Chapter V

BASIC AREAS OF DISSENSION AND AGREEMENT WITHIN THE "NEW CONSERVATIVE" ORDER

History shows us that human beings are endowed with a teleological tendency towards inevitable change under the impact of altered circumstances.[1] Conservatives, by no means, prove to be exceptions. Even the image of liberalism has been transformed beyond recognition during the last century. In view of this, there should be no cause for surprise or dismay if conservatism in the present age has shifted ideological ground and taken on some features of nineteenth century liberalism thereby creating a degree of dissension within its ranks.

Conservatives disagree. They sometimes disagree not only on specific issues but on seemingly basic principles. As James Burnham writes in his Congress And The American Tradition, "Some hold, for example, that conservatism is based ultimately on an individualistic philosophy; others, that it rests on an 'organic' view of society; still others that its roots are theological."[2] Mr. Burnham goes even further by listing thirteen different attitudes

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[1]A classical example of this can be seen in the actions of Southern politics and politicians.

[2]Cited in James Burnham, Congress And The American Tradition (New York, 1959), p. 27.

which distinguish conservatives from liberals; but even here, at the level of day-by-day action, he will commit himself only so far as to say that these attitudes are "elements or symptoms that often (though not always) occur together."[3]

While conservatives go about the task of establishing and exploring the meaning of their community, it is good for them to keep Mr. Burnham's cautionary observation in mind. Conservatives do not always agree with each other. Judging from the analysis presented in the last chapter this seems quite obvious, and it would not be mentioned here were it not for the fact that ever so often, in various journals of opinion, especially conservative journals, certain conservatives have found it necessary, as a result of finding themselves unable to concur with what a fellow conservative has written, to present conflicting opinions which are far afield, almost to the extreme, to that of his fellow colleague.

One of the lines of demarcation finds itself marked in devout divergence concerning their models or ideological ancestors. In the interest of space and cohesiveness the author will not attempt a comprehensive coverage of these ancestors, as that administered Edmund Burke in chapter three, but rather mention them in passing as a means of illustrating a point. Viereck, who rather pass-

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[3] Ibid., ch. II.

ively assumes the role of a deviate along these lines, predominantly finds himself idolizing the writings and actions of Metternich. Even though he considers Metternich "a Burkean" he sternly criticizes Burke for "choosing between contradictory traditions sometimes on the basis of natural rights and sometimes simply because of their age."[4] In spite of this criticism he is inclined to identify himself with the reformist side of Burke. As a matter of fact, Viereck goes so far in preferring the reformist spirit of "Tory democracy" that he strongly recommends cooperation with democratic socialists in Europe, and, if necessary, the adoption of segments of their program.

The "New Conservatives" in America exert a great amount of appeal to tradition and order in their various philosophies. Needless to say, this marks another line of demarcation among their ranks. This line is evidenced, however, through their degrees of emphasis. Russell Kirk, in his A Program For Conservatives, states his case in the following manner:

> I do not want our traditions to run out, because I do not believe that formal indoctrination, or pure rationality, or simple imitation of our contemporaries, can replace traditions. Traditions are the wisdom of the race; they are the only sure instruments of moral instruction; and they teach us the solemn veneration of the eternal contract which cannot be imported by

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[4]Peter Viereck, Conservatism Revisited (New York, 1949), p. 137.

> pure reason. ... A people who have lost their traditions are starved for imagination and devoid of any general assumptions to give coherence to their life.[5]

Through the use of his religious overtones, for which he is so well known, Kirk seemingly relates them to the writings of Burke as a means of further illustrating his profound reverance for traditions:

> Society is indeed a contract ... but not a contract in any mere historical or commercial sense. It is a partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who yet to be born. It is a contract, too, between God and man, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible worlds, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed places.[6]

In his attempt to expound upon man's "knowability" of the contents of this contract he resorts to the "age-old" escape mechanism of insisting that it is "commonly ... inscrutable" and inaccessible to reason.[7]

Before casting his dissenting vote Viereck makes an attempt to define tradition. He defines it as "all the lessons of the past, but only the ethically acceptable events." He then casts his dissent by stating: "Not all the past is worth keeping. ...

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[5]Russell Kirk, A Program For Conservatives (Chicago, 1954), p. 305.

[6]Ibid., p. 296.

[7]Ibid.

Though the events of the past are often shameful and bloody, its lessons are indispensable." In that the reactionary means "all the events" of the past in his traditional scheme, rather that the "ethically acceptable" ones, according to Viereck, "he misses all the lessons."[8] The use of the term "reactionary" by Viereck seems to step squarely on the toes of Kirk. In all of his modesty and geniality, Viereck is emphatic in accepting the proposition that American traditions are liberal but still insists that it is the function of conservatives to preserve those traditions. Even more, he accepts the reforms of the New Deal not only as inevitable but as positively desirable when evaluated by conservative standards.[9]

It may be granted that tradition is a habitual pattern of thinking and acting, and in part is a "fact" of social life. But when habit is elevated as a guide to action and is given the obligatory quality of an "ought" the "fact" is transformed into a norm and becomes traditionalism. Thus, the legitimacy of a social order may be based on tradition. But, as Max Weber observed, there is absolutely nothing normative

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[8]Viereck, op. cit., p. 5.

[9]Ibid.

about habit as such, "It is either a mechanism or a concrete pattern of actual behavior, not a way men should act."[10]

By transforming a fact into a value, "traditionalism" tends to lead to confusion through the creation, in many instances, of circular reasoning. Thus, if the conservative is asked, "Why should tradition be obeyed?" his answer is likely to be, "Because obedience to tradition is the condition of a well-ordered society." Upon being pursued even further with the question, "What is a well-ordered society?" the conservative would probably reply, "One in which tradition is obeyed."

This normative theory has even been applied to the historical realm. Kendall states it this way:

> ...We must seek out those notions of good and evil that survive through all the changes, so that we are nearest to the core of the tradition when we touch upon those beliefs ... that have a) perdued in recognizable form over the longest period of time, and b) have proved themselves genuine by being acted upon consistently.[11]

To find the answer to political, social, and economic problems from an examination of history is actually to go to a realm of ethics, perhaps to a concealed crypto-ethic. To apply history as a norm and to demand that individuals regard themselves as bound by history brings history itself to a standstill.

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[10]Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (New York, 1937), p. 646.

[11]Willmoore Kendall, The Conservative Affirmation (Chicago, 1963), p. 223.

Still another line of demarcation exists within the "New Conservative" ranks. This line is made evident by differences of opinion on the issue of civil liberties. In writing upon this aspect of the New Conservative "ideology," if it might be referred to as such, Viereck proceeds very cautiously in that he bifurcates the term into two different areas. He writes:

> The two primary types of equality should not be confused, the first legal and objective, the second psychological and subjective. In the definable, tangible, explicit sphere of legal rights, equality is possible in a country like America and also desirable; inequality in that sphere weakens liberty by making it seem hypocritical. But in the indefinable, intangible, implicit sphere of cultural and social status, equality is impossible; it involves too many insatiable, semiconscious cravings of pride.[12]

In an attempt to futher clarify this statement, Viereck cites illustrations of the American education system.

> Two current trends in American education illustrates at its worst and at its best the second equality. At its worst: equally encouraging the qualified and unqualified to proceed to college and thereby to destroy the educational standards needed for survival. At its best: removing racial segregation in

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[12]Quoted in Viereck, The Unadjusted Man, op. cit., p. 43.

> schools, thereby reducing psychological bruises that would otherwise discredit as hypocritical the first (legal) equality of the Fourteenth Amendment.[13]

Russell Kirk analyzes this proposition from the standpoint of "social justice." Being the religiously inspired individual that his writings portray him as being it seems only logical that his ideas, on this subject, would possess spiritual overtones. He, too, has a two-fold "communicative" justice and "distributive" justice.[14] In defining these two concepts he resorts to the words of Jeremy Taylor, who wrote some 300 years ago. He defined the former as "that justice which supposes exchange of things profitable for things profitable" and the latter as "that arrangement in society by which each man obtains what his nature and his labor entitle him to, without oppression or evasion."[15]

Having viewed these, among other, lines of divergence one might be led to conclude that all is lost for the New Conservative cause. This happens not to be the case. It is for New Conservatism to profit from its disagreement if it is frankly admitted and honestly debated. They may also profit by heeding the following words of advice which appeared in an editorial in Modern Age:

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[13] Ibid., p. 44.

[14] Kirk, op. cit., p. 169.

[15] Ibid.

> ... A position worth holding is worth arguing; a position that cannot withstand criticism is not worth holding. Two men who reach similar conclusions on the basis of seemingly opposed philosophies may well discover through the examination of each other's point of view that their philosophies have unsuspected kinship. Two men who advance opposing programs on the basis of the same philosophical assumptions have grounds for hoping that discussion will reveal faulty reasoning on the part of one or both -- or, better yet, find out that their common philosophic approach implies a broader program embodying values that were only seemingly in conflict. We need not fear debate among ourselves.[15]

Despite certain divergences, many New Conservatives hold in common various mutual attitudes and underlying principles -- not only among themselves, but also with the men and women in every walk of life who make up the rapidly growing "New Conservative" movement. These basic agreements are demostrated again and again in spite of the particular and often rather opposed theses of conservative writers.

Conservatives, almost without exception, recognize the transcendent goal of human existence and the primacy of the freedom of the person in the state. While there is great divergence among conservatives as to the degree to which the state must be limited, they basically share a distaste for the use of the

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[15]"These and Other Issues," Modern Age, Summer, 1960, p. 35.

power of the state to enforce "ideal" patterns upon human beings. The mythological outlook which recognizes men as faceless units to be organized and directed in accordance with the blueprints of the social engineer, can be held only when men ignore the separate integrity of each human being as a focus of value and the existence of immutable moral laws not susceptible to ideological conservative structures.[16] Frank Meyer, a devout conservative, has this to say as a means of conservative agreement on this point:

> Whether the concentration of conservatives is on the importance of the free-enterprise economic system and the strict limitation of the state as guarantee of the freedom of persons from the plans of the social engineer, or on the living multiplicity of the community arising from the rich tradition of a civilization, the libertarian and the traditionalist emphases within conservatism alike reject the centralized power and direction necessary to the planning of society.[17]

That fused position maintains that the only possible ultimate vindication of the freedom of the individual person rests upon a belief in his overriding value as a person, a value based upon transcendent considerations. And, it further maintains that the duty of men is to seek virtue; but it insists that men cannot

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[16] Frank Meyer, What Is Conservatism? (New York, 1960), p. 228.

[17] Ibid., p. 230.

do so, in actuality, unless they are free from the constraint of the physical coercion of an unlimited state. This point is further illustrated in the following quotation found in National Review:

> ... the simulacrum of virtuous acts brought about by the coercion of superior power, is not virtue, the meaning of which resides in the free choice of good over evil.[18]

The New Conservatives stand in agreement for a division of power, in order that those who hold it may balance each other and the concentration of overweening power be foreclosed. They stand for the limitation of the power of the state, division of power within the state, a free economy, and prescriptive protection of the rights of individual persons and groups of individual persons against the state. They do not visualize the state as an absolute evil; rather it is regarded as a necessary institution. In other words, the state is not regarded as an evil instrument so long as the force it wills is effectively limited by a constitutional understanding of the bounds within which that force may not intrude upon the sacred sphere of the individual person, and so long as that understanding is enforced by division and balance of powers.[19]

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[18]"This And Other Issues," op. cit., p. 29.

[19]Ibid.

The spirit of the Constitution of the United States as originally conceived permeates the writings of the "New Conservatives: the limitation of government to its proper functions; within government, tension and balance between local and central power; within the Federal government, tension and balance between the coordinate branches. Irrespective of whether their emphasis is upon tradition and order or upon liberty, New Conservatives generally agree in their veneration of the ordered liberty conceived and executed by the Framers of the Constitution.

As a final measure the author will briefly consider the renewed emphasis upon religion for which the "New Conservatives," in large measure, are calling. However varied their religious commitments, the "New Conservatives," for the most part, accept the existence of an objective moral order based on what Eric Voegelin has called "the constitution of being" -- that is, the existence of immutable standards by which human conduct should be judged.[20] Hallowell asserts that "just as liberty is a function of subordination, so character is a function of religious conviction."[21] Francis Wilson puts it this way:

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[20]Eric Voegelin, Order And History (Louisiana, 1956), p. 8.

[21]John H. Hallowell, The Moral Foundations Of Democracy (New York, 1957), pp. 109-13.

> A government which encourages the secularism of private life by public example is a criminal accessory. Such considerations lead not to religious exhortation but to an attack upon the public schools and upon government for too rigidly adhering to the separation of church and state.[22]

For the most part the New Conservatives maintain that government support of religion is necessary in our age, and that such support is entirely in accord with constitutional law so long as it is nondiscriminatory.

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[22]Francis G. Wilson, "The Anatomy of Conservatives," Ethics, July, 1960, p. 269.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Far from being an outmoded philosophy of the past conservatism is most applicable to many of the most vital issues of the present. Conservatism at all times and in all countries has stood for religion, patriotism, the integrity of the family and respect for private property as the four pillars of a sound and healthy society. Add to this its tradition of guarding against the excesses of the revolutionary dictator and the follies of dogmatic general ideas, its realistic view of the nature of man and its libertarian significance in this age of grasping centralized state power -- and one finds in conservatism a creed which should appeal to many who are distressed by some of the weaknesses that have developed in democracies in an era of industrialism and mass communication.[1]

While the emphasis of conservatism may shift from one country and one era, such as that presented to England in the eighteenth century and the present form being witnessed in America today, there are certain intellectual traits which make

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[1]William Henry Chamberlain, "Conservatism In Evolution," Modern Age, VII (Summer, 1963), p. 73.

conservatism not a passing form of political and social organization, but a permanent outlook on life. No reasonable New Conservative denies the need for change and reform in a viable, on-going society. But the New Conservative will oppose change for the sake of change. He will , in other words, agree with Lord Falkland, the middle-of-the-road man in England's struggle between King and Parliament, who pronounced the maxim: "When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change."[2]

The New Conservative places more trust in the inherited experience of the human race than in the operations of an individual doctrinaire intellect, however brilliant. He views human society, in Burke's words, as "a compact between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born" as a chain of continuity which can only be disrupted at a terrible cost in human values, and for achievements of very doubtful value.[3] Even though the New Conservative might appear to be such to the beginning reader of the conservative philosophy, he is not a nihilist who desires to make a clean sweep of existing institutions and start constructing a brand new order with a sketch on a tabla rasa.

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[2]Stated In Arthur Bryant, The Spirit Of Conservatism (London, 1955), p. 173.

[3]Burke, "Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs," Works, IV, p. 76.

The New Conservative takes a seemingly less optimistic view of human nature than the "liberal" or the "revolutionary." He is instinctively bored of triteful refined phrases which tend to shield or conceal basic realities. He persostently looks behind the label of such expressions as "social justice," "economic democracy," and "century of the common man," and ask just what these expressions are supposed to convey and how they are to be implemented.

The New Conservatives are criticizing a predominantly "liberal" order, and their criticisms of it are of a fundamental nature. Philip Chapman phrases it in this manner:

> Their objections -- to its materialism and secularism, to the pervasive influence of mass opinion, to its equalitarianism and conformism, and to its degradation of older religious, aesthetic and cultural values, by reproduction and adulteration -- constitute a rejection of many of its most characteristic features. A radical or a thoroughgoing reactionary is perfectly at home in such a situation: he spins out a society and, if the conditions are right, makes preparations to bring it into being.[4]

It is important that one understands the relation of the New Conservatives to the society that they are criticizing, on the one hand, and to the aristocratic tradition to which they appeal, on the other. First, it should be emphasized that they are them-

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[4]Philip C. Chapman, "The New Conservatism," Political Science Quarterly, LXXV (March, 1960), p. 18.

selves members of this society. They are not the products of a traditional resistance to mass power. Since the early decades of the nineteenth century, America has had no politically functioning class or interest which has identified itseld with the task of restraining the growth of the political power of the democratic masses. "The conservative criticism of mass values," Chapman further postulates, "is not a traditional function, but a spontaneous and contemporary development."[5]

The New Conservatives have made a very serious attempt to compare the form of civilization that has developed in America with that of Britain and Europe, and to judge the former by the latter. This effort has proved lacking in certain aspects in that it has involved an appeal to a tradition which is simply not there.[6] The problems of this country and this culture do not possess any intimate or organic connections with those of Europe. The thoughts of Burke, Maistre, Metternich and the rest were real enough responses to stresses which arose there, and as such they remain instructive enough for anyone interested in the rich European past. But then to try making

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[5] Ibid.

[6] For a detailed analysis of this postulation see Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition In America (New York, 1955), p. 17; also see Eric L. McKitrick, "Conservatism Today," The American Scholar, XXVII (Winter, 1957-58), 52.

parallels with America's experience is really straining the connection too far, especially when it comes to placing men like Alexander Hamilton, John Randolph, John Calhoun, and John Adams in the same tradition, one in which they have very little business, if any at all.

Historians generally accept the proposition that historically our society at large has not been a conservative one at all;[7] if anything, it has been "liberal," and its principle feature has been the very dynamic and unconservative quality of ever-expanding capitalism. Even the concern of our politics and politicians (and this includes Alexander Hamilton) typically has been not that of slowing down the speeding process but rather of adding coal to the fire.

The watchword may be "tradition," but it is quite a drawback if we are never certain as to whose traditions are being invoked. If he so desires, the present-day American may declare himself a conservative, as he is urged to do by Kirk and others. But one hesitates to accept that kind of explicitness. An impelling question which seemingly should be answered by the proponents of the "New Conservative" doctrine, as a means of locating its sustaining force, may be stated thusly: "It is to be found in

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[7]See Leonard W. Labaree, Conservatism In Early American History (New York, 1948); Clinton Rossiter, Seedtime Of The Republic (New York, 1953); and W. Hardy Wickwar, "Foundations Of American Conservatism," American Political Science Review, XLI (June, 1947).

philosophical principles imported from Europe, or in a ser of emerging perceptions about the nature and workings of American society?"

America is different, both in history and present state, and the full conservative tradition simply will not flourish on this soil. We shall continue to harbor conservatives, and they will continue to serve us. We shall continue to study Burke and learn from him about the follies and cruelties of Jacobin democracy. It would, however, be the greatest of follies and crudest of delusions to shape the philosophy of American conservatism in the full image of English or European conservatism, which even today has made no stable peace with industrial capitalism or liberal democracy. We are not ready in this "new" country for "old-country" conservatism. If we are lucky, we may never be.

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